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Ecoso Exchange Newsletter

Crow Collection Association

Ecological, Social and Political Discourse

No 2/37, December 1995

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The Senate Citizenship Inquiry is featured in this ECOSO (on pages 5 to 11). Also included, some information on the history and the current situation in our local libraries. A report on workplaces in the Western Region is on page 11. Thus :-

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News from the Crow Collection

Good wishes to Susan Jennison who is now living in New Zealand. For the last 5 years Susan has represented the VUT Libraries on the Crow Collection Committee of Management. We will miss Susan, not only for her help as a librarian but also her knowledge of and experience with community organisations in the Western Region. We will be keeping in touch with her through Ecoso.

Our Ecoso subscriber in Los Angeles, Prof. Leonie Sandercock, will be returning to Melbourne in mid 1996. She has accepted an appointment at RMIT. We have already written to Leonie suggesting that the Crow Collection would like to have a welcoming function, such as was held to launch the Crow Collection in 1990. Leonie has written back saying "I think your idea of a student seminar on planning for the 21st century is an excellent one". So watch out for further information !

At the September meeting of the Crow Collection Association there were four main decision :-

- * to hold a student seminar (in Spring 1996 or Autumn 1997)
- * to organise an essay award as a preliminary to seminar
- * to have a welcoming function for Prof Leonie Sandercock
- * to continue Ecoso in its present format with the main themes for the next year to be on citizenship and human rights, and information technologies and communities.

GLOAMING IN THE GARDENS

*Don't miss out on our mid summer gathering.
Bring your friends, relations, neighbours
to the Royal Botanic Gardens on Wednesday, January 17th
We picnic near the kiosk from about 5.30 to 8.30 pm,
BYO picnic meal*

Four and Twenty Gentlemen Meet To Plan A Library and Reading Room

AN EXCELLENT AND WORTHY IDEA

1982 marked the 100th year of the decision to establish the North Melbourne Library. In February 1882 a meeting was held by *"twenty four gentlemen interested in establishing a free library and reading room"*. The local newspaper, at that time called the Northern Advertiser, reported that *"so excellent and worthy an institution would, no doubt be the means of drawing scores of youth, whose time, instead of being misspent as it is now, will be devoted to gathering information and storing their minds with useful knowledge"*.

The meeting decided to raise money from the Government to build a Mechanics Institute and library on land next to the newly built Town Hall in Queensberry Street. The completed building of lecture halls, library, meeting rooms for members, separate meeting rooms for the public, and shops on the street frontage, was opened in December 1883,

Various societies and classes were held including a literary and debating society, a choral society, gymnastic classes, quadrille clubs and billiards. Only male members were permitted to have any say in the management of the Institute but women could borrow books. There was no provision for children to use the Institute.

The Committee of Management chose the books and tried to cover a wide range of interest. This is reflected in the fact that the library held books by such controversial personalities as Charles Darwin and Cardinal Newman. However books by German authors were banned in 1916.

THE CHILDREN'S LIBRARY - MANAGED BY SIXTEEN WOMEN

In 1923 a children's library was established and it was managed by a Children's Library Committee of 16 women. It was disbanded in 1926, possibly for campaigning too vigorously to update the library's facilities (!!). In 1927 women were admitted for the first time to the Annual General Meeting. They requested the right to choose books for people under 18 years and also to vote in the management of the Institute. They won the right to choose, but not the vote.

During the 1930s the library pioneered a new way of encouraging children to read books through schools visiting the library. In 1940 children from 21 schools in the Melbourne Municipality, a total of 5000 pupils, visited the library with their teachers. There were 80,000 book exchanges per year.

END OF AN ERA - BUT DISBANDED COMMITTEE CONTINUES

In 1956 the Library Committee was disbanded. From then on the Melbourne City Council has officially funded and managed the library. The billiard table and accessories were sold, marking

the end of an important aspect of the Mechanics Institutes,

The change in management, however, did not mean that the committee members ceased to meet. Before disbanding, in 1956, the committee members formed the North Melbourne Progress Association with the expressed intention of monitoring the library services provided by the Council.

The North Melbourne Progress Association continued to meet until the early 1960s. In addition to its library monitoring it successfully campaigned to establish an Elderly Citizens' Club. In the early 1960s it alerted the public to the immanent end of the 99 year lease on the Town Hall land and the possibility of plans to abolish the North Melbourne Town Hall building.

BULL-DOZERS IN NORTH MELBOURNE - OFFICE SPRAWL IN WEST MELBOURNE

In the 1960s the block demolition actions of the Housing Commission in North Melbourne and the unbridled expansion of the city into West Melbourne destroyed much of the community fabric in North and West Melbourne. By the mid 1960s, however, a new type of urban action organisation, the North Melbourne Association was formed.

By the end of the 1970s the library played a significant role in establishing the North and West Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre and the community newspaper, the *North Melbourne News*. The expansion of the community information services at the library has greatly helped local organisations.

What will be the future of North Melbourne Library ?

Most of the information in this article is from the book by Margaret A Dean "North Melbourne Free Library and Mechanics Institute 1880 to 1956". A copy is in the Crow Collection.

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Libraries ???

A Selection of Quotes

"LIBRARIES MUST REMAIN LOCAL AND UNDER LOCAL CONTROL"

What will be the future of our libraries ? These quotes have been selected to help further the campaign for our local library services to continue to be accessible to the whole community, not just to those who can pay.

First, from the special Library Edition of the "City Alternative News", Sept 1995, (published by community organisations in Carlton)

The Library (at present) is free and accessible to everybody: People enter it with a feeling of entitlement. As centres of knowledge, culture, and social exchange it is not too far-fetched to say that libraries are a valuable working model for democracy.

Politicians, Commissioners and Council Managers argue that Compulsory Competitive Tendering is not privatisation, that it will not lead to deterioration in library services, but efficiency and improvement. We are not convinced. If services are owned by a private company, or a business unit, or

4.
ex council employees, then the essential feature of libraries - the service, is privately owned. (Marian Turnbull and Cecilia Cairns)

Local Government Minister, Roger Hallam extols a contract-run library in which cost per book-loan, books on shelves, and other simplistic parameters are the measures of effectiveness of the service. Such statements make us realise that, in the case of libraries, more than any other service the application of Compulsory Competitive Tendering is a matter of ideology which goes beyond simply handing the people's assets to private operators.

Like most privatisation initiatives practised in Australia by major parties CCT was spawned by the Thatcher Government; even the term is a Thatcherite brain-child. The word "compulsory" refers to the suspension of local democracy by big brother who decrees that no matter how efficiently a local government runs its service, this mode of operating has to be replaced through competitive tendering by contractors. (Gerry Harrant).

I do not agree with CCT of library services. Social education services are underpinned by free accessible libraries. (Iris Silva Brito).

Imagine the potential to strike it rich if a publisher, advertiser or book-seller had access through the library information network to the names and address, sex, age and borrowing interests of library members". (Ted Hopkins)

Here are some quotes from Bill Garner's article in "Eureka Street", (A Jesuit publication, October 1995)

Libraries do threaten the new order because they contain history, the ideas the imagination, the very independence and identity of the older order. ...Commercial principle also cut across the culture of librarianship. Here is a true example : Management consultants brought in to the State Library identified rare books as not paying their way and advised that they could be sold off to buy books which would be more productive in terms of user service. (Bill Garner)

And, finally, here is a quote from an article by John Sawyer in "Frontline - Labour Movement and Community News" (September 1995) :-

Compulsory competitive tendering (CCT) represents the biggest threat to public libraries. At a time when information technology is becoming cheaper, libraries should be expanding services they provide. Instead of debating the merits or opportunities of universal access to the information super highway, library users face the prospect of their local branch library turning into a cross between a video store and a Seven-Eleven

With suppliers paid on the basis of "performance", less popular books and important literary and political works will be weeded out. The book stock will emphasise the popular fast moving items. The need for profits will see staff qualifications reduced to a minimum. One consultant suggests that libraries offer commercial opportunities for audio-video sales, business equipment and life style services such as hair cuts, restaurants and cafes.

*There is an organisation called the Friends of Libraries Australia
Their address is PO Box 436 Tullamarine, Victoria 3043
Membership subscription is \$10 for individuals and \$20 for organisations
More information about FOLA phone Colin Watson, (03) 9690 3228
Most local libraries have a Friends of the Library
Watch the notice-board at your library.*

The Wide Ranging Debate on Our National Identity

Contributed by Ruth Crow

Ecoso 2/36 included a brief statement on the Senate Inquiry on Citizenship. This article reports more fully on the written and oral submissions which have been printed in Hansard.

As reported in Ecoso 2/36 I made both a written and an oral submission. Here are a couple of quotes from my oral statement:-

I think the process of popularising the Senate inquiry can be done through seeking out what are the value judgements that community organisations have written into their constitutions. ...During my life I have seen what I call the moral and cultural transformation of society may be only in little ways, I know - but this has been achieved through value judgements becoming real to people. ...One reason why I am interested in the Citizenship Inquiry is to make sure that people have a chance to tell the Inquiry why they do come together in organisations, - a chance to have their aims and objects recognised as contributing to the values of our society.

The idea of participation in planning empowers people. It is not just a matter of consultation. It is a matter of helping people to envisage the future.... to see how they can fit in and how they can change society in various ways... to work our strategies and to monitor what happens to these strategies.

On the practical side, as the Senate Inquiry has the task of working out a system of "National Citizenship Indicators". I proposed the following rights and responsibilities :-

1. to actively define local needs and to participate in developing strategies to meet these.
2. to participate in ensuring the eradication of all forms of male domination over females not only in the union movement but also in the community movements.
3. to have access to community services and the recognition that such access is limited when people lack confidence in their ability to participate (new technologies, for example the information superhighway, and changing economic relationships, for example privatisation, are tending to reduce such access).
4. to be educated about Australian history , especially in regard to indigenous people and our relationships with our Asian neighbours.
5. to encourage respect for our national environment and other species so that provision for our human needs is designed in such a way that the needs of other forms of human life are also taken into account.
6. to know about the rights and responsibilities of the Australian Government as a member of the United Nations.

SOME OTHER SUBMISSIONS RAISED SIMILAR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

There were 78 submissions and one way I have studied them has been to see who else raised one or more of the six points I raised. Using the numbering system I have used for the six points above here are the results :- .

1. Opportunities for Community Participation was raised in a

variety of ways. For example, in an oral submission, Alison McClelland (Deputy Director, Social Research, Brotherhood of St Laurence) warned that Australian Governments are pursuing a narrow notion of what it means to participate in the community :-

There is a decline in the notion of community membership and people are increasingly classified and discussed as economic agents, consumers, producers or workers, rather than as human beings, members of communities and particularly, as people for whom relationships are important. One of the things which this (the Senate Inquiry) may do is to affirm the people's connectedness which is something you do not get out of the economic discourse. (page 83, Hansard, 24/7/95).

And here are two more quotes from oral submissions, the first one is from Prof. Alastair Davidson, (Politics Department, Monash University and the second one is from Dr Susan Kenny, Centre for Human Rights and Citizenship at Deakin University :-

This touches a bit on what Ruth Crow was saying. If you refocus your attention, as has been done recently in Australia, on a notion of citizenship and citizen participation, basically what you are doing is saying you want to hear the voices from below. But here we have many voices and they are coming from many different places. (page 132, Hansard, Oral submission, page 132).

My experience, with years of research that I have been doing in communities, is that they do know where their resources are; where it is fair to make decisions about their own interests, where they should be having a say about global issues, where they should not be having a say, and where they can use their own resources.....Going back to the questions of active citizenship and the point about lack of resources to fulfil all the wish lists that we might have about having a good active citizenship, what people fail to realise is that there are already resources out there in the community untapped. There are already skills amongst people - particularly amongst women - that people do not know about so they have not been encouraged to use them. (Hansard, Oral Submissions, page 143, 24/7/95)

2. The Eradiction of All Forms of Male Domination Over Females.
The quote from Sue Kenny implies this as a right and responsibility but it was more emphatically stated by Prof. Marilyn Lake (History and Women' Studies at Latrobe University). Here are several quotes from her written submission. (Hansard from page 719, Written Submissions Vol 5) :-

Active citizenship and a full engagement in civic and public life have traditionally rested on a sexual division of labour, which allocated responsibility for domestic work and the care of dependents to women. This necessary underpinning of public life has worked to prevent women's equal participation in political and civic affairs. Equal access to citizenship demands formal recognition of the vital role of caring work in national life and an end to women's virtual monopoly in this sphere.....for Affirmative Action to be effective in the public domain, it must also be applied to the so-called private domain of unpaid work.

It is not by accident that women have been marginalised as citizens. For them to become equal citizens in the future, men will need to assume an equal responsibility for caring work, which in turn will need to be reconceptualised as a basic "right" and normal "responsibility",

3. Access to Community Services was featured in a number of submissions, usually in association with ideas on participatory democracy but also using the occasions to raise consciousness

about the effects of privatisation on the provision of services and access by the community to information. For example, in her oral submission, Patsy Morrison (Executive Director, Victorian Council of Social Services) stated :-

Victoria, in particular, has recently seen some severe cuts in public expenditure and community services as a result of state government policies of debt reductionof course the end result of resource constraints at one end, and increased demand at the other, is a lowering of standards of both access to services and the quality of those services (Hansard page 91).

Robyn Penman (Research Director, Communication Research Institute. ACT) raised concern about public communication practices warning that research had shown. Although the quotes are out of context the warning is quite clear :-

Concomitant with the growing use of market research and advertising companies is the growing reliance on experts. In our study of federal government information campaigns, we found that departments frequently called in private relations consultants, or the like, to help with their campaigns

The effects of the use of experts - especially communication/social science ones - is twofold. First, the increasing use of market researchers and opinion samplers, rather than giving politicians and public servants a real understanding of the electorate, acts to keep the citizens out of the political discursive space. As Poole (1989) has commented "Public opinion has become not a matter of reason and debate, but the specialised product of the advertising and public relations industries". As a consequence there is no genuine interaction between the citizen and the political players. Instead, the process is mediated by "experts".

The important point is that experts are only experts in one form of knowledge.

While communication continues to be taken as a simple tool for achieving specific goals, it is impossible to engage in what Macintyre calls a "moral quest". A moral quest requires deliberation about what sort of things are good for their own sake; not what effects can be brought about. (Hansard, Written Submissions, Vol 2, page 255).

4. The Relationship Between Citizenship and Australian Studies and the Recognition of our History as a Colonial Country with Asian Neighbours was featured in a large number of submissions. Here are a few quotes from a submission by Prof. John McLaren, ((Dept. Humanities, Victoria University of Technology) :-

I think any concept of citizenship must depend on recognition of the prior occupancy (by the Aboriginal community) of this country, and on the fact that the rest of our society is a settler society. To deny that is to ignore the nature of community.

I have noticed in recent years that my students in Australian Cultural Studies have been less interested in studying the Australian component of that (Australian Studies). They are more interested in very specific, concrete problems such as our relationships with Asia, our relationships with the Aboriginal community and with environmental issues. Some people argue that this is a retrograde step, that it means less interest in Australia. I think it is probably a progressive step. It means that a great deal of the effort that was put into Australian Studies in the schools and in the universities ten

years and more back is now bearing fruit. (Ecoso emphasis) The students know a great deal about our history despite complaints to the contrary and they feel they do not want to go over it again. They want to move forward into more precise issues, the very issues that this committee is concerned with. (Hansard, Oral Submissions, page 168).

5. Taking Account of Other Forms of Life was not recognised in most submission, however in his submission on education, Rod Charles (Deakin University, School of Languages and Culture) spoke about the role of education making it possible for people to attach to their communities and he added :-

One of the things too that we have become interested in over the past few years as we have looked at the environment issues that we stand embedded in, we would argue that now there is a very real need for people to act collaboratively together. If, as we are told, our resources are limited, ways in which we act privately may have to be curbed as we act in more collaborative ways. (Hansard, Oral Submissions, page 156).

Richard Mochelle (A PhD. student in citizenship education) made a more direct statement which was generally agreed to by other panel contributors at the oral hearing . He said :-

Moral responsibility in this epoch of globalisation requires citizens to care inclusively, for the world as a whole, to decide every day "work time" commitments in response to the important priority global challenges, as cosmopolitan citizens. (Hansard, Oral Submission, page 172.)

Justice Elizabeth Evatt expressed her interest in the Inquiry and included the following brief, challenging reminder on the environment :-

Could I also mention that the Earth Council, of which I am a member, is developing indicators to show how well States are implementing the principles of the Earth Charter adopted (by the United Nations) at Rio in 1992. I am not sure whether the Committee will be looking at Environmental issues . They will become more important in time as measures of well-being. (Hansard, Written Submissions, Vol 1, page 199))

6. Australia's Relationship with the United Nations is a central responsibility for all who are concerned about citizenship.

Elizabeth Evatt (see last quote above) is one of the few people to include some reference to the UN in their submission. The Board for Social Responsibility of the NSW Synod of the Uniting Church of Australia is another. They included the following statements:-

As well as benchmarks within Australia, we need to take seriously international benchmarks. At the current time the best international benchmark would appear to be the United Nations Development Index. The HDI should replace GDP as the fundamental indicator of Australia's well being, in the assessment and development of government policy.

While there should be room for innovation within the indicator system, it is crucial that Australians be able to compare the situation within Australia with the situation in comparable countries overseas, and that Australian indicators therefore include internationally recognised indicators such as the United Nations Human Development Index. The Australian system should reflect international best practice, and include mechanisms to upgrade systems so that it remains in line with international best practice as this develops. (Hansard, Written Submissions, Vol 5, page 878)

The Australian Law Reform Commission's submission is another Ecoso Exchange 2/37, Dec. '95, page 8.

exception. They are also advocating support for the UN Human Development Report. Here are two quotes from a section of their document on "Monitoring Benchmarks":-

The "Human Development Report" 1992, published by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), contains a discussion of a large number of criteria relevant to the measurement of human development throughout the world. It includes statistics such as rates of unemployment and human capital formation. Assuming that proper links can be forged between rights and obligations which the Committee is interested in measuring and the concept of human development, this report may be of some assistance in satisfying the Committee's objective. (Hansard, Written Submissions, Vol 3, page 490)

The Commission commends, for the Committee's consideration, the United Nations Human Development 1992, and the attached article which deal with the establishment of statistical monitoring system in relation to human development and human rights abuses. (Hansard Written Submissions, Vol 3, page 492)

The 20 page report referred to was published by John Hopkins University Press has been reprinted in Hansard. Its conclusion is significant :-

The problem is no longer whether it is scientifically possible to recognise risks for vulnerable groups. Rather, the question is whether there is enough political will, financial backing and organisational ability to continuously and comprehensively monitor abuses to make early warning in the human rights field a reality.....It remains to be seen whether the United Nations, in the aftermath of the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna takes up this challenge. ((Hansard. Written Submissions, Vol 3, page 520).

Some of the submissions from various Federal Government Departments and from some members of federal parliament give very useful factual information on how Australia is fulfilling its international obligations to the United Nations. For example, Mary Murnane, (Deputy Secretary, Commonwealth Department Human Services and Health) lists some of the UN conventions ratified by Australia in regard to health. (Hansard, Written Submissions, Vol 2, page 650). A submission from Department of Social Security, submitted by Peter Baldwin MHR, details the relationship between Australia and the United Nations (Hansard, Written Submissions, Vol 3, page 582 to 585).

SHEER COMPLACENCY A RISK TO DEMOCRACY

In preparation for the Inquiry Hearings the Senate Legal and Constitutional Reference Committee published a "Discussion Paper" which was prepared by Michael Salvaris (Centre for Urban and Social Research, Swinburne University of Technology). In a section on the "Meaning of Citizenship" Michael points out that "there are tensions and ambiguities within the idea of citizenship itself"

One such tension is that between the idea of citizenship as a narrowly prescribed legal status defining relations between individuals and state and a broader process of social and civic participation..... Another tension has been the extent to which citizenship is a nationalistic concept, only possible within the structure of a nation state, or universal notions based on ideas like human rights. (Discussion Paper, page 8)

The submission from Graeme Campbell (MHR for Kalgoorlie) illustrates the views of some-one who regards citizenship as "a narrowly prescribed legal status" and who seems to have little understanding of multiculturalism. He claims citizenship has been

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eroded and should be more difficult to achieve :-

All citizens should have a basic proficiency in both written and spoken English before being granted citizenship. They should have to undergo a certified test, held under rigorous and uniform conditions. It will be no good at all if individual examiners, with some deluded idea of "compassion", are allowed to pass poor performers, while others having done the work see the test made a mockery.....All applicants should pay for any English classes they require to pass the test. (Hansard, Vol 1 Written Submissions, page 35).

In the Hearings in Melbourne on July 24th, 1995, Dr Ray Jurreidini and Mr Jospeh Wakim represented the Australian Arab Council. Joseph Wakin described the effects of the Gulf War on the Arabic community :-

The Gulf War is one period that is very frequently referred to as a testing stage not just for multiculturalism but also for citizenship. Many have speculated as to whether we Australians have passed or failed that test. Having worked as a grass roots worker, a social worker, at that time I vividly remember the sentiments of the Australian Arabic communities at that time and the siege mentality that prevailed as a direct result of an absolute plethora of scapegoating and vilification, particularly in the Australian press.....this is not by any means a peculiar experience of the Australian Arabic community. (Oral Submissions page 159)

The attitude to multi-culturalism of other members of the Hearing Panel at which Joseph Wakim spoke, can be summed up by a quote from Prof. Bryan Turner (Dean of Faculty of Arts, Professor of Sociology, Deakin University Centre for Citizenship and Human Rights) :-

I think that underlying a lot of what has been said this afternoon is a problem about the nation state. The earlier conception of citizenship that forms the basis of much contemporary discussion comes from the 18th and 19th centuries where nations states were trying to homogenise societies by suppressing subordinate languages (Ecoso emphasis) and having a very strong sense of centralised integration. Now there has been the development of global exchange labour markets, the growth on international electronic communications exchanges, high levels of migration and so forth..... We need a new conception of community and a new conception of identity and I think this conception has to be more flexible and more attuned to the kind of current circumstances of the political entity. (Oral Submissions, page 176).

"A NEW CONCEPTION OF COMMUNITY AND A NEW CONCEPTION OF IDENTITY"

Prof. Turner's words (in the quote above) are a challenge to all who are striving for a dynamic concept of citizenship and a re-vitalised democracy, but as Michael Salvaris warns :-

One of the greatest risks to democracy is sheer complacency (Discussion Paper)

PS Most of the quotes in this Ecoso article are from academicians. Hansards shows that there have been submissions from some Trade Unions and some Churches but, to date, it does seem that community organisations are unaware of this opportunity to shape the future. It is hoped that this article will help to encourage wider participation. For information write to the Secretary, Senate Legal and Constitutional References Committee Parliament House, Canberra 2600, Phone 06.277.3561

If your address slip is marked "ND" or "OD" please send \$10 subscription to the Crow Collection, address on back page.

Centre charts region's unemployment malaise

Republished from *Nexus*, 5/17.

By **Santina Bertone**,
Executive Director, Workplace
Studies Centre

Aspate of newspaper reports this year shone a stark spotlight on the unemployment situation of Melbourne's western suburbs. Drawing on government employment statistics, they showed that Melbourne's west and north-west had borne the brunt of Victoria's job losses. In fact, with an unemployment rate of 14.6 per cent, Melbourne's north west enjoyed the dubious distinction of having the highest unemployment rate in the country. At the same time, most job growth had shifted to areas south and east of the city.

These developments, while disturbing, were not new. The employment malaise of Melbourne's western suburbs has been a longstanding problem, due largely to the impact of major structural changes in Australian industry. Changes which have seen a dramatic decline in blue-collar manufacturing jobs, a major shift towards service sector employment, increased part-time and casual work, and greater emphasis on a skilled workforce. The recessions of the early 70s, 80s and 90s exacerbated these trends, contributing to plant closures and job losses. State government cutbacks also led to widespread redundancies. However, such cyclical factors are only part of the story. It is now generally acknowledged that changes in the

structure of the Australian labour market are both permanent and wider ranging.

Throughout its four-year history, the Workplace Studies Centre has specialised in research that is particularly relevant to people in the western region. While many of our studies have been

nationally funded and focused, the questions they dealt with have contributed insights into the working lives of blue-collar manufacturing workers, a key group in the western suburbs. With our focus on women and non-English speaking background immigrant workers, these studies have high-



lighted issues faced by those most vulnerable to change in this culturally diverse region.

Award restructuring, enterprise bargaining, competency-based training, are just some of the issues impacting on the working lives of the workers we have studied. The evidence is now mounting that, unless the industrial parties take a good, hard look at their change strategies and acknowledge the diverse requirements and talents of their workers, both society and industry will suffer.

For example, recent research conducted for the Department of Industrial Relations confirmed what the Workplace Studies Centre had warned two years ago: that non-English speaking background workers consider themselves worse off than other groups with regard to enterprise bargaining. The results of our qualitative research across seven industries was completely consistent with a concurrent survey of 11,000 workers in Australia. Both studies highlighted the adverse experiences reported by relatively more immigrants than Australian-born workers and the need for culturally appropriate communication strategies in the workplace.

Similarly, our pioneering study on non-English speaking background women workers and the effects of training reform, shows how manufacturing industry has failed to tap the skills and interest of this group of workers. Instead, the reform process has been based on hierarchical male-

centred models of workplace training. Studies since then have merely confirmed and elaborated these findings.

We look forward to the release of another study in November, which for the first time, looks at the retrenchment experiences of immigrants in the Melbourne western region. In the meantime, it is disturbing to note the ever-increasing evidence that employers in this region are shunning immigrant labour, by imposing recruitment tests which exclude applicants with poor English literacy.

In our recent report to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, the Centre pointed out both the opportunities and dangers of workplace reform for immigrant workers. As with many of the reports, we proposed policy strategies to address the challenges involved in transforming Australian industry while achieving equity and access for all groups. I am sure we will continue to attract work of this nature, as policy-makers and others grow more aware of the urgency of these issues. For my part, I look forward to contributing to this lively debate.

If you would like to contribute a Nexus commentary, please contact the Public Affairs Branch. Commentary authors take responsibility for the views expressed in this column.

Ecoso Exchange Guidelines

Adopted 1973

1. Ecoso has a value judgement in favour of regeneration and promotion of community participation meaning that it is humanising and enriching for people to relate to each other through one form or another of voluntary participatory activity both on the job and off the job, exercising a measure of control over such activities.
2. A consequent recognition of the necessity for change in life-style and behaviour patterns to one that sees the quality of life as an alternative to consumerism, understood as mass production and consumption of wasteful and unsatisfactory goods and services based on compulsion and manipulation.
3. Accordingly a policy of restricting the use of energy and non-renewable resources per head and hence a planned design of community including size of population, where people can relate to each other and to nature in order to reduce wasteful goods and services and at the same time guaranteeing an adequate minimum subsistence for all, using modern technology to this end.
4. The recognition that such objectives cannot be achieved either on the basis of practical, linear, one-level ecological remedies or with authoritarian and manipulative control of affairs and requires participatory effort to achieve global equilibrium.

(Subscription to Ecoso Newsletter \$10 for 6 issues. Ecoso was first published from 1967 to 1980. It was revived in 1988. The Crow Collection Association was formed in 1990. It has adopted Ecoso as its newsletter. More information about the Crow Collection and Ecoso from the address below.)



Crow Collection Association (Incorp.)
A Living Library to Plan for the 21st Century

*C/o Ms Sheila Byard, Dept of Urban and Social Policy,
Victoria University of Technology, Box 14428 MCMC,
Melbourne 8001. Phone (03) 9688.4754, FAX (03) 9688.4324.*